



Minnesota ESSA State Plan Amendment Overview

In March of 2022, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) submitted an amendment to the accountability section of its state plan under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in response to feedback from schools and communities over several years, as well as to adapt to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the usefulness of key measurements.

After discussions with the U.S. Department of Education, MDE made some required revisions to its amendment. The U.S. Department of Education approved the revised amendment on July 1, 2022.

The amendment's changes can be broken into three major categories: changes based on feedback from schools and communities prior to the pandemic and changes in response to the effects of the pandemic on data quality.

Changes based on feedback from schools and communities prior to the pandemic.

- Planned **new indicators of school quality or student success (SQSS)**, in response to significant support for supplementing the current SQSS indicator, consistent attendance.
 - Once Minnesota Common Course Catalogue data are available through the Ed-Fi system, Minnesota will again amend its plan to add measurements of:
 - Participation in a well-rounded education.
 - Successful ninth grade course completion.
 - Successful completion of career- and college-readiness coursework.
- Shift to using the **state definition of American Indian**, as supported by TNEC. The state definition is more inclusive than the federal definition and will better represent the performance of American Indian students in Minnesota. Data using the state definition will be available for 2022 and formally integrated into the accountability system beginning with the 2022-23 school year.
- Identification of high schools for support.
 - Differentiate identification of **schools focused on credit or dropout recovery** from the identification of other high schools. "Schools focused on credit or dropout recovery" includes schools such as area learning centers (ALCs) and charter schools serving similar student populations. Specifically, the proposed changes would:
 - Use the **seven-year graduation rate** instead of the four-year graduation rate when determining which schools focused on credit or dropout recovery must receive comprehensive support (the highest level of support, provided mostly by the Regional Centers of Excellence). The four-year rate will be used for initial identification of all high schools, but among credit or dropout recovery schools, only those with a seven-year rate below 67% will be required to receive

comprehensive support. Credit or dropout recovery schools with a four-year rate below 67% but a seven-year rate above 67% may choose to receive comprehensive support but will not be required to do so.

- **Link schools focused on credit or dropout recovery with the schools from which they draw many of their students** so that support can focus both on students' experiences in the schools focused on credit or dropout recovery and their earlier experiences in other schools.
- Only identify high schools for comprehensive support if the **graduation rate for all students is below 67 percent**. Under Minnesota's previous state plan, schools were also identified for comprehensive support when student group graduation rates are below the 67 percent threshold. The previous approach has contributed to spreading out the limited support resources ESSA provides the state.
 - Minnesota's initial amendment proposed that schools be identified for targeted support (a moderate level of support, provided mostly at the local level) rather than comprehensive support when a student group's graduation rate is below 67 percent. The U.S. Department of Education denied this proposal.
- When a high school is identified for support, supporting any school from which it draws 30% or more of its enrollment. Unlike in Minnesota's initial amendment proposal—and unlike the specific identification of schools linked to credit or dropout recovery schools—this support will come without a formal identification.
- Removal of existing additional support categories not required by ESSA.
- Minor technical changes to ensure performance thresholds align across all identification methods using the state's stage-based decision process.
- The timeline for Minnesota's graduation goal will be brought into alignment with the timeline for all other state goals with an end goal year of 2025.

Changes in response to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on data quality.

- **Test-based data from 2019 will receive more weight than data from 2022** to reflect the effect of the pandemic on participation rates in statewide tests, with 2019 receiving twice the weight of 2022. Lower participation rates, as Minnesota and other states have seen so far in the pandemic, result in less reliable data. Relying heavily on pandemic-era testing data creates significant risks of accountability data being artificially high or artificially low, which reduces the accountability system's ability to accurately identify schools for support.
- A one-time **enrollment maintenance** indicator will substitute for the consistent attendance indicator in 2022. Consistent attendance data from before the pandemic will still be used, and the one-time enrollment maintenance indicator will play a very small role in the final identification process. Consistent attendance data during the pandemic is considered unreliable because of the significant variation in local definitions of attendance and attendance-taking practices during the shift to online learning and the adaptations to both online and hybrid learning models.